

URP 500: PLANNING THEORY

Fall 2021

Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:00 – 11:30 am

Primary Instructor: Prof. Scott Campbell (sdcamp@umich.edu)

Writing Instructor: Dr. Julie Steiff (jsteiff@umich.edu)

This course provides an introduction to the history and theories of urban planning. URP500 is the introductory course in a series of theory courses: URP 580 (Metropolitan Structures); URP 700 ([Advanced Urban Theory](#)) and URP 701 (Epistemology and Reasoning for Planning Research). The planning program offers two sections of Planning Theory; the other section is taught by Prof. Kinder (with greater emphasis on physical planning & design). We aim to have roughly the same number of students in each of the two courses.

The course covers several broad themes: (1) the historical rise of cities, suburbs and planning; (2) ethical and theoretical questions in planning; (3) case studies of planning; (4) the politics of planning and urbanization; (5) emergent trends and future possibilities of the economic, technological and social-spatial transformation of cities; and (6) debates in planning over social justice, sustainability, democracy and inequality.

Throughout the course we will examine how urban and regional planning has confronted a series of debates and challenges: whether planners should think like architects, social critics or private developers; whether plans should be grand and comprehensive or cautious and incremental; whether planners should assist or resist the private market; whether planners should be neutral professionals or social advocates; and whether planners should create utopian visions of how cities could be or to pragmatically deal with cities as they are. The conflicting styles of the course readings themselves -- varying from the practical to the scholarly -- also reveal a debate within planning: should planners develop complex theories of urbanization and decision-making, or simply deal with immediate practical and professional challenges?

The course is built upon an extensive set of historical and contemporary readings. The lectures are intended to complement, rather than substitute for the readings. You will get the most out of the course if you invest the time to actively engage the readings BEFORE each class.

Course syllabus: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdcamp/urp500/>

Course requirements: complete all the required readings before the scheduled class time; actively participate in class discussions and presentations; write several short essay assignments; observe (either in person or online) and critique a planning board meeting; write 15 short reading responses. Dr. Steiff will schedule optional but highly recommended one-on-one writing conferences in the week before each essay assignment due date.